



Berkley Public Safety Video Update Part 2

I've heard that you serve other roles within the Region, given the fact that training is very crucial now more than ever, can you kind of share more about those other roles that you serve and what you share with other departments?

As far as the Police Chiefs go and Fire Chiefs, I'm a member of Oakland County, Southeast Michigan, Michigan and International Associations of Chiefs of Police. I think that's important because I get a lot of good info from them and a lot of good model policies from them. But in Oakland County, I'm also president of what's called Oak Tack which is short for Oakland County Tactical Training Consortium. It's been around for about 10 years. I was a founding member, and currently president. We train for critical incidents together. I'm a firm believer in you have to be ready for anything. The likelihood of something really really bad happening here is hopefully not, but we need to be ready for it just in case. I'm a firm believer that you know if something happens in Oak Park, we're in Oak Park. If something happens in Royal Oak, we're in Royal Oak and vice versa. We all work together and we all try to train for major incidents the same way. It's the same on the fire-side also with Automatic Aid, and Mutual Aid on the fire-side. We have to be really good at high risk, low-frequency events.

Also being president takes on regional leadership roles, for instance with some of the protests that have happened recently, we have an Oakland County Mobile Field Force which is for lack of a better term a "riot squad" that we have not had to utilize and we don't plan on utilizing, unless things get really out of hand; which I don't see, especially here in Oakland County, but we need to be prepared for it. We've had to talk to some departments that thought they may need something like that and they did not. We were able to talk to them later on, and they realized it would have made the situation worse.

We talk about de-escalation which I think also as a county region we de-escalate also. I should mention that all 40 law enforcement agencies in Oakland County are members of that consortium so it's really really good, and we try to be consistent.

I think that's important and you touched on a couple of points about how you're part of those decision-making groups that decide when higher levels of police presence are needed, but also I think it's a critical component specifically in Berkley that we are essentially part of a larger unit because of our size and the geographic region. Could you kind of expand a little bit more on that? I know a lot of the conversations that I've



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had with previous public safety officers and with you is that we work a lot with Huntington Woods, Royal Oak, and you mentioned Oak Park. Can you talk about that specific relationship in our region because as you said in the beginning, Berkley itself might not be the most diverse, but our surrounding communities are and could you talk about the importance of that relationship and how it impacts our Public Safety Officers?

Sure, I think part of that is networking. If you have a problem, the worst time to try to meet somebody is during that problem. So it's good to know people beforehand. Mr. Baumgarten shared when I interviewed for this job, he told me they couldn't find anybody that didn't know me to interview me because you're not supposed to have you know somebody when you're being interviewed and I was proud of that. I'm pretty well known in Oakland County and in this region so that's really important to have those relationships and it goes back with members of the community. It's the same thing with other departments both police and fire. We have to have those relationships beforehand, we have to know and trust the people we work with. That's both our officers here and the officers we work within other departments. Some of the higher risk items like; our rapid intervention team which is basically rescuing a downed firefighter, we need to be on the same page before it happens we can't do it then. Active shooter response, for instance; school shootings we've trained well over 2000 officers in Oakland County since its inception so that if something bad happens we're all on the same page because that is the likelihood of reducing injuries, and deaths are much higher when you're not prepared for it. We have on the fire-side, we have Automatic Aid where if there is a fire in Oak Park or Beverly Hills we all respond. A couple of good things with that; first of all, it gives us help when we need it; second of all, it gives our officers experience when they go to other cities, also. It's just kind of the way we do things and it's the way it's been done here and I can't take credit for that. It's been done this way for years here.

It's the police side where I think we've really made some inroads for our relationship building with our neighboring departments. We have two instructors that are active shooter response instructors so they actually train Oakland County officers in that discipline. We have three members of the Mobile Field Force, and we have two officers that are on the Technical Rescue for our fire group. We also have an officer assigned to the Hazardous Response Team which gives us an in-house expert for here but it also helps benefit the whole region and our City.



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Certainly, I think that's great. Can we dive in a little bit more in terms of experience and in terms of the relationship building with the community at large, and how that relates to our police officers? You know obviously, it might be a unique experience, not saying this could happen but on the occasion that it's a non-resident coming into the community and experiencing that relationship with one of our police officers or public safety officers excuse me, and vice versa.

I think it's always good to try and make those relationships beforehand. First of all, when I started in public safety at 18, I went to the police academy at 20, I was on my own working midnights when I was like 21 in four months so I've evolved since then. I tell people when I was in the police academy, I was most voted most likely to arrest my mother so I was not like I am now when I was younger. My experiences have really taught me a lot, but I'm a firm believer in getting out of the car (and interacting) when you can. It's kind of hard as public safety officers because we have all of our fire equipment in our cars and we have all of our medical equipment in our cars. We need to be close to our cars at all times, but I really encourage our officers to try to make contact when it's not necessary and when it's not adversarial. When you stop somebody for a traffic citation it doesn't matter how professional they (civilians) are, they are going to be nervous. I worked in surveillance for a couple of years where I drove an unmarked car, had long hair and a nose ring and I got stopped, being a police officer I was still nervous. So I definitely get that but the biggest thing we try to do is get out in the community.

You know we've had coffee with a cop. We have two of our own events every year; our lids for kids and our fire open house. We're involved in every single event that the City hosts. We really try to get out there and we really encourage people to talk to our officers. Just to stop by the station for our events because that's where the relationship-building happens. It's hard to build a relationship if your house is on fire or if there's a medical (emergency). You know those are stressful times so we try to build those (relationships) up when it's not stressful. I have a sense of humor, I don't know if it's good or not, but we like to keep things light when we can and show that we are human. I think a lot of people when they hear public safety officers or police officers they think of robots and we're not like that. I can tell you these are some really good men and women that are human beings, and they are really always trying to do the right thing.